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ABSTRACT

In an effort to assess the effectiveness of their remedial reading courses, Moraine Valley Community College (MVCC) in Palos Hills, Illinois, undertook a study of the retention, course completion, and graduation rates of students who completed one of three remedial reading courses: RDG-040, basic skills for students reading below the 7th grade level; RDG-070 for students reading between the 7th and 8th grade levels; and RDG-090, critical reading skills for students reading between the 9th and 11th grade levels. The study focused on characteristics and outcomes for 130 students enrolled in RDG-070 and RDG-090 and 90 students enrolled in RDG-040 in fall 1988. Results of the study included the following: (1) for the 130 RDG-070 and RDG-090 students, 60.8% were enrolled full-time, another 60.8% were enrolled in transfer programs or transfer courses, 64.6% were first-time students, and the median age was 19; (2) 72.3% of these students (N=94) completed their reading course with a "C" or better; (3) of these 94 students, 95.7% returned the following semester and 71.3% returned the following year; (4) 21.3% of RDG-070 and RDG-090 completers (n=20) had received a degree from MVCC by spring 1992; (5) 55% of the 90 students in RDG-040 completed the course with a "C" or better; (6) of RDG-040 completers, 80.0% returned the following semester, while 56% returned the following year; and (7) 10.0% of RDG-040 completers (n=5) received a degree from MVCC by the spring of 1992. Data tables are included. (MAB)

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Remedial Reading Students at Moraine Valley

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September 1992

Moraine Valley Community College
Office of Institutional Research
Palos Hills, IL

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RE: Remedial Reading Students at Moraine Valley

I. Introduction

Moraine Valley Community College, like the majority of community colleges, maintains an open enrollment policy. This allows any individual to enroll in credit courses at the college upon completion of an application and placement testing. Open access admissions policies usually result in the enrollment of a significant number of students underprepared for college-level coursework.

If a college maintains an open enrollment policy, then there is a clear need for remedial/developmental education; and community colleges have a long history of providing developmental coursework. These developmental courses are designed, theoretically, to remediate student deficiencies so that the students can then successfully complete college-level coursework.

There are few published reports assessing the effectiveness of remedial coursework. In part, this is because longitudinal tracking has been cumbersome, time-consuming and therefore expensive. In part also, this is because of the difficulty in defining desired outcomes, or "success". For example, is a gain in reading level from the 3rd grade level to the 6th or 7th grade level a successful outcome? A significant increase in reading ability is usually considered a successful outcome, particularly if a student was functionally illiterate at entry. However, some might consider that anything less than preparation for college level work (11th or 12th grade reading level) is a failure.

Can students who enter the college with moderate or severe academic deficiencies - and complete remedial coursework - be expected to perform the same as students who have college-level skills at entry? The ability of a former remedial student to complete college-level coursework is universally considered a successful outcome. But what completion rate for college-level coursework should be expected of former remedial students? Is 50 percent a good completion rate?, or 75 percent?, or 100 percent? The same question applies to graduation rates. That is, what percent of remedial students should we expect to graduate? This report does not attempt to answer these questions, but rather to provide baseline data for continuing analysis and further discussion.

The following report summarizes retention, course completion, and

graduation rates of students who took a remedial reading class at Moraine Valley in fall 1988. Future reports will analyze rates for students in developmental communications and mathematics classes. Fall 1988 was chosen as the semester for analysis because it was the first semester of mandatory placement and because at least four years are needed to calculate graduation rates.

Several comparisons are made in this report between remedial reading students and all Moraine Valley students. However, no statistical analyses of differences can be made since there is no control group (that is, students assessed at the same level who did not take a reading class). One would expect differences between remedial reading students and students who did not need remedial coursework. The figures for all students are included as a reference point only; former remedial students and "all students" are **not** comparable groups.

II. Remedial Reading Courses at Moraine Valley

Moraine Valley offers three levels of reading classes. RDG-040 covers basic reading skills, vocabulary and comprehension on a functional level; students who test into this course read below the 7th grade level. RDG-070 is the second level reading course, emphasizing vocabulary, comprehension and rate skills, and is designed for students who read at the 7th to 8th grade level. The third reading course is RDG-090, which emphasizes critical reading skills and is intended for students who read at the 9th through the 11th grade level.

Exploratory analyses showed considerable differences between RDG-040, RDG-070, and RDG-090 students. However, there were not enough students in each group for three analyses. For this report, RDG-070 and RDG-090 students were combined; RDG-040 students are analyzed separately.

III. RDG-070 and RDG-090 Students Registered Fall 1988

Student Characteristics

A total of 130 students registered for the second and third level reading class in fall 1988. Table 1 shows a summary of student characteristics. Seventy-seven students registered for RDG-070, and 53 students registered for RDG-090. About six out of ten (60.8 percent) were enrolled in transfer programs or transfer courses, 21.5 percent were enrolled in occupational programs or occupational courses and 17.7 percent were enrolled in non-degree courses.

Somewhat more than half were male (52.3 percent) and somewhat less than half were female (47.7). About six out of ten (60.8 percent) were enrolled full-time, and about four out of ten (39.2 percent) were enrolled part-time. Slightly less than two-thirds were first-

time students (64.6 percent) and slightly more than one-third (35.4 percent) continued their enrollment from a prior semester or semesters.

Table 1
Fall 1988 RDG-070 and RDG-090 Students
Demographics

Characteristic	Number	Percent
Class		
RDG-070	77	59.2%
RDG-090	53	40.8%
	130	100.0%
Moraine Valley Program		
Transfer	79	60.8%
Occupational	28	21.5%
Non-degree/Other	23	17.7%
	130	100.0%
Gender		
Female	62	47.7%
Male	68	52.3%
	130	100.0%
Enrollment status		
Full-time	79	60.8%
Part-time	51	39.2%
	130	100.0%
Status		
First-time	84	64.6%
Continuing	46	35.4%
	130	100.0%
By high school graduation year		
Recent high school graduate (spring 1988)	65	50.0%
Not recent graduate/unknown	65	50.0%
	130	100.0%
Age		
Median	19	
Mean	21	
Range	17 to 61	

Half of the students (50 percent) were recent high school graduates (that is, they entered Moraine Valley directly from high school), and half were not. The average age was 21; the median age was less (19). The oldest student was 61 and the youngest was 17.

Table 2 shows a summary of the grade distributions for the fall 1988 RDG-070 and RDG-090 classes. Overall, 72.3 percent of the students (N=94) completed their reading class with a grade of C or better. Ten percent (N=13) received a D, or F in their reading class, and 17.7 percent (N=23) received a grade of N, W, or I. The grade distributions were similar for RDG-070 and RDG-090 students.

Table 2
Fall 1988 RDG-070 and RDG-090 Students
Grade Distributions

Class	Total Number Students	Grades in Reading Class					
		A, B, C		D, F		N, W, I	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
RDG-070	77	56	72.7%	8	10.4%	13	16.9%
RDG-090	53	38	71.7%	5	9.4%	10	18.9%
TOTAL	130	94	72.3%	13	10.0%	23	17.7%

Retention Rates

Across-term and across-year retention rates are shown in Table 3. For the 56 RDG-070 students who completed their reading course with a C or better, 92.9 percent returned the following semester (spring 1989); and 71.4 percent returned the following year (fall 1989). All (100 percent) of the RDG-090 students (N=38) who completed their reading course with a C or better returned the following semester, and 71.1 percent returned the following year.

Combining the RDG-070 and RDG-090 students (N=94) who completed their reading course with a C or better, 95.7 percent returned the following semester, and 71.3 percent returned the following year.

The across-term rate for RDG-070/RDG-090 completers (95.7 percent) is considerably higher than across-term rates for all college-credit students at Moraine Valley. The fall 1988 to spring 1989 return rate for credit students was 60 percent; rates have ranged between 57 and 64 percent over the last several years. Across-year retention figures for all students have not been calculated at the college, therefore there are no reference point figures available for comparison.

Not surprisingly, the across-term and across-year retention rates are considerably lower for students who did not complete their reading course with a C or better. See Table 3. For the RDG-070/RDG-090 students (N=13) who received a D or F, 61.5 percent returned the following semester and 23.1 percent returned the following year. For the RDG-070/RDG-090 students (N=23) who received a W, N or I grade, 43.5 percent returned the following semester and 17.4 percent returned the following year.

Table 3
Fall 1988 RDG-070 and RDG-090 Students
Across-Term Return Rates and Across-Year Retention Rates

	N	Across Term Return Rate		Across Year Retention Rate	
		N	%	N	%
	RDG-070 Students:				
Grade A, B, C	56	52	92.9%	40	71.4%
Grade D, F	8	5	62.5%	2	25.0%
Grade W, N, I	13	5	38.5%	4	30.8%
RDG-090 Students:					
Grade A, B, C	38	38	100.0%	27	71.1%
Grade D, F	5	3	60.0%	1	20.0%
Grade W, N, I	10	5	50.0%	0	0.0%
Combined RDG-070 and RDG-090:					
Grade A, B, C	94	90	95.7%	67	71.3%
Grade D, F	13	8	61.5%	3	23.1%
Grade W, N, I	23	10	43.5%	4	17.4%

Completion Rates for Reading Related Courses

Table 4 shows a summary of "reading related" class grades for the RDG-070/RDG-090 completers (the 94 students who received a C or better). The number in the second column in the table is the number of students that registered for each "reading related" class between fall 1988 and spring 1992. The percentages in the third column are the percent that registered for each class. For example, 64 of the 94 students (68.1 percent) registered for a COM-101 class between fall 1988 and spring 1992.

There were two "reading related" classes taken by half or more of

the RDG-070/RDG-090 completers: COM-101 (68.1 percent) and COM-102 (50.0 percent). Less than 50 percent registered for one of the other "reading-related" classes. HUM-101 (47.9 percent) and PSY-101 (47.9 percent) had the most registrations after COM. HIS-101 (11.7 percent), PSY-100 (17.0 percent) and PHI-101 (13.8 percent) had the fewest registrations.

The fourth and fifth columns in Table 4 show the number and percent of students who completed the class with a C or better. It should be noted that the completion figures in Table 4 are based on the highest grade earned by the student. That is, if a student repeated a course and received a C or better the second time, then the student was counted as a completer. In all classes except HIS-101, at least one student repeated the class.

RDG-070/RDG-090 completers had the highest completion rates (C or better) in COM-101 (57 out of 64 or 89.1 percent), followed by COM-102 (80.9 percent) and BUS-100 (80.0 percent). Completion rates were 60 percent or higher in all classes except HIS-101. The number of students who registered for HIS-101, however, was small.

Table 4
Fall 1988 RDG-070/RDG-090 Completers (N = 94)
Summary of "Reading Related" Class Grades

Class	Registered For Class*		Completed With A, B, or C	
	Number	Percent (N = 94)	Number	Percent (Based on number that took class)
COM-101	64	68.1%	57	89.1%
COM-102	47	50.0%	38	80.9%
HUM-101	45	47.9%	28	62.2%
HIS-101	11	11.7%	4	36.4%
BUS-100	20	21.3%	16	80.0%
PSY-100	16	17.0%	12	75.0%
PSY-101	45	47.9%	27	60.0%
SOC-101	30	31.9%	22	73.3%
PHI-101	13	13.8%	9	69.2%

* Between fall 1988 and spring 1992

Several C or better completion rate calculations are shown in Table 5. The first percent column shows completion rates for RDG-

070/RDG-090 completers based on the highest grade earned (the same percentages shown in Table 4). The second percent column shows grade distributions for RDG-070/RDG-090 completers based on all grades earned. That is, the percentages in this column include both grades if a course is repeated. For all courses, except HIS-101 and PHI-101, the inclusion of repeated course grades lowers the completion rate.

The third and fourth percent columns in Table 5 show C or better completion rates for all Moraine Valley students. These percentages were calculated based on the combined grades for all students between fall 1988 and fall 1991, and spring 1989 and spring 1992. The third percent column shows percentages for students who **never took** a reading class. Most of the students who never took a reading class were students whose test scores showed college-level reading skills. The fourth column is combined data for all students. As one might expect, students who never took a reading class had higher completion rates than all students.

Table 5
Completion Rate Comparisons

Class	Percent Completing With A, B, or C**			
	RDG-070 or RDG-090 Completters		Students who never took a RDG class	Grades for all Students Fall 88-Spring 92
	Percent (based on highest grade) N = 94	Percent (based on all grades) N = 94		
COM-101	89.1%	82.6%	69.1%	67.2%
COM-102	80.9%	69.1%	70.7%	68.7%
HUM-101	62.2%	57.1%	74.8%	72.4%
HIS-101*	36.4%	36.4%	56.9%	51.7%
BUS-100	80.0%	69.6%	61.1%	58.9%
PSY-100*	75.0%	70.6%	72.0%	68.2%
PSY-101	60.0%	50.0%	70.6%	68.4%
SOC-101	73.3%	68.8%	74.6%	72.3%
PHI-101*	69.2%	69.2%	71.6%	70.3%

* Less than 20 students.

** Between fall 1988 and spring 1992

Comparing completion rates for COM-101, both RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-highest grade (89.1 percent), and RDG-070/RDG-090

completers-all grades (82.6 percent), had a higher percent of C or better grades in COM-101 than students who did not take a reading class (69.1 percent) and all students (67.2 percent). RDG-070/RDG-090 completers also had higher completion rates in BUS-100 (80.0 percent and 69.6 percent) than did all students (61.1 percent and 58.9 percent).

For HUM-101, both RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-highest grade (62.2 percent), and RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-all grades (57.1 percent), had a lower percent of C or better grades in HUM-101 than students who did not take a reading class (74.8 percent) and all students (72.4 percent). RDG-070/RDG-090 completers also had lower percentages of C or better grades in PSY-101 (60.0 percent and 50.0 percent) than all students (70.6 percent and 68.4 percent).

RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-highest grade, had the highest percent of C or better grades in COM-102 (80.9 percent), followed by students who did not take a reading class (70.7 percent), RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-all grades, (69.1 percent), and all students (68.7 percent).

For SOC-101 classes, students who did not take a reading class had the highest percent of C or better grades in SOC-101 (74.6 percent), followed by RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-highest grade (73.3 percent), all students (72.3 percent), and RDG-070/RDG-090 completers-all grades (68.8 percent). HIS-101, PSY-100 and PHI-101 had fewer than 20 RDG-070/RDG-090 completers.

Graduation Rates

Table 6 shows graduation rates for RDG-070 and RDG-090 completers. Thirteen of the 56 RDG-070 completers (23.2 percent) had received a Moraine Valley degree or certificate by spring 1992. For RDG-090 completers, 7 out of 38 (18.4 percent) had graduated. Overall, 20 of the 94 students (21.3 percent) had received a Moraine Valley degree. In addition, one student who had received a W in RDG-070 in fall 1988 also graduated.

While no control group exists for making statistical comparisons of graduation rates, it is nevertheless interesting to examine graduation rates for other groups of fall 1988 students. The Fall 1988 Cohort Analysis of first-time students shows a 13 percent graduation rate (by spring 1992) for all students. The higher rate for RDG-070/RDG-090 completers (21.3 percent) compared to all Moraine Valley students is probably due, at least in part, to a difference in original intent to graduate.

Some other fall 1988 to spring 1992 graduation rates from the Cohort Analysis are: recent high school graduates (25 percent), full-time students (23 percent), students age 20 or under (20 percent), students with transfer intent (19 percent), students with an AA or AS initial curriculum (18 percent), part-time students (4

percent), students whose initial curriculum was non-degree (1 percent).

Table 6
Fall 1988 RDG-070 and RDG-090 Students
Graduation Rates*

	N	Graduation Rate	
		N	%
RDG-070 Students:			
Grade A, B, C	56	13	23.2%
Grade D, F	8	0	0.0%
Grade W, N, I	13	1	7.7%
RDG-090 Students:			
Grade A, B, C	38	7	18.4%
Grade D, F	5	0	0.0%
Grade W, N, I	10	0	0.0%
Combined RDG-070 and RDG-090:			
Grade A, B, C	94	20	21.3%
Grade D, F	13	0	0.0%
Grade W, N, I	23	1	4.3%

* Received Moraine Valley Degree or Certificate by Spring 1992

III. RDG-040 Students - Fall 1988

Table 7 shows a summary of the grade distributions for the fall 1988 lowest level reading classes (RDG-040). Overall, slightly more than half (55.6 percent) completed their RDG-040 class with a grade of C or better. D or F grades were received by 23.1 percent, and 21.1 percent received a grade of N, W, or I.

Table 7
Fall 1988 RDG-040 Students
Grade Distributions

Class	Total Number Students	Grades In Reading Class					
		A, B, C		D, F		N, W, I	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
RDG-040	90	50	55.6%	21	23.3%	19	21.1%

Retention Rates

Across-term and across-year retention rates for RDG-040 students are shown in Table 8. For the RDG-040 students (N=50) who completed their reading course with a C or better, 80.0 percent returned the following semester (spring 1989). The across-year (fall 1988 to fall 1989) rate dropped to 56.0 percent. This across-term retention rate (80 percent) was higher than that of all students (60 percent).

For the RDG-040 students (N=21) who received a D or F, 47.6 percent returned the following semester and 23.8 percent returned the following year. For the students (N=19) who received a W, N or I, 36.8 percent returned the following semester and 31.6 percent returned the following year.

Table 8
Fall 1988 RDG-040 Students
Across-Term Return Rates and Across-Year Retention Rates

	N	Across Term Return Rate		Across Year Retention Rate	
		N	%	N	%
RDG-040 Students:					
Grade A, B, C	50	40	80.0%	28	56.0%
Grade D, F	21	10	47.6%	5	23.8%
Grade W, N, I	19	7	36.8%	6	31.6%

Completion Rates for Reading Related Courses

Table 9 shows a summary of "reading related" class grades for the RDG-040 completers (the 50 students who received a C or better in

RDG-040). The first number column is the number of students that registered for the "reading related" class between fall 1988 and spring 1992. The first percent column shows the percent that registered for the class. For example, 27 of the 50 students (54.0 percent) registered for a COM-101 class between fall 1988 and spring 1992.

COM-101 was the only "reading related" class taken by more than half of the RDG-040 completers (54.0 percent). Less than 40 percent (fewer than 20 students) registered for one of the other "reading-related" classes.

The last two columns in Table 9 show the number and percent of students who completed the "reading related" class with a C or better. These completion figures are based on the highest grade earned by the student. The completion rates ranged from 37.5 percent (PSY-100) to 100 percent (COM-102). It should be noted that these percentages are based on a small number of students.

Table 9
Fall 1988 RDG-040 Completers (N = 50)
Summary of "Reading Related" Class Grades

Class	Registered For Class*		Completed With A, B, or C	
	Number	Percent (N = 50)	Number	Percent (Based on number that took class)
COM-101	27	54.0%	18	66.7%
COM-102	10	20.0%	10	100.0%
HUM-101	16	32.0%	13	81.3%
HIS-101	0	0.0%	0	-
BUS-100	9	18.0%	5	55.6%
PSY-100	8	16.0%	3	37.5%
PSY-101	19	38.0%	11	57.9%
SOC-101	12	24.0%	10	83.3%
PHI-101	4	8.0%	3	75.0%

* Between fall 1988 and fall 1992.

Graduation Rates

Table 10 shows graduation rates for RDG-040 completers. Of the 50 RDG-040 completers, 5 students (10.0 percent) had received a

Moraine Valley degree by spring 1992. In addition, one student who had received a W in RDG-040 in fall 1988 also graduated.

Table 10
Fall 1988 RDG-040 Students
Graduation Rates*

	N	Graduation Rate	
		N	%
RDG-040 Students:			
Grade A, B, C	50	5	10.0%
Grade D, F	21	0	0.0%
Grade W, N, I	19	1	5.3%

* Received Moraine Valley Degree or Certificate by Spring 1992.

Comparison of RDG-040 Students to RDG-070/RDG-090 Students

Comparing RDG-040 students to RDG-070/RDG-090 students, some differences were noted. Overall, students in the lowest reading level class (RDG-040) were somewhat less "successful" than students in the second and third level reading classes (RDG-070/RDG-090).

A lower percent of students in RDG-040 completed their reading class with a C or better (55.6 percent) than students in RDG-070/RDG-090 (72.3 percent). Across-term return rates were lower for RDG-040 students (80 percent) than for RDG-070/RDG-090 students (95.7 percent). Across-year retention rates were also lower: 56.0 percent compared to 71.4 percent. RDG-040 students also had lower graduation rates (10.0 percent) than RDG-070/RDG-090 students (21.3 percent). Comparisons of "reading related" class completion rates were not made because of the small number of RDG-040 students.

IV. Summary

- . A total of 130 students registered for the second or third level reading class (RDG-070/RDG-090) in fall 1988; 72.3 percent completed their reading class with a grade of C or better
- . For the RDG-070/RDG-090 students (N=94) who completed their reading course with a C or better, 95.7 percent returned the following semester and 71.3 percent returned the following year.
- . This across-term return rate (95.7 percent) was considerably

higher than for Moraine Valley students overall (60 percent).

- . COM-101 and COM-102 were the only two "reading related" classes taken by 50 percent or more of the RDG-070/RDG-090 completers.
- . RDG-070/RDG-090 completers had the highest completion rates in COM-101, COM-102 and BUS-100 (80.0 to 89.1 percent).
- . Completion rates (based on highest grade) were 60 percent or higher in all "reading related" classes examined except HIS-101.
- . For all "reading related" courses examined, students who never took a reading class (ie. students who had entry-level reading skills) had higher completion rates than all students.
- . Overall, 21.3 percent of the RDG-070/RDG-090 completers had received a Moraine Valley degree or certificate by June 1992.
- . For the lowest level reading class (RDG-040), 55.6 percent completed the class with a grade of C or better.
- . For the RDG-040 students (N=50) who completed their reading course with a C or better, 80.0 percent returned the following semester and 56.0 percent returned the following year.
- . COM-101 was the only "reading related" class taken by more than half of the RDG-040 completers. (54.0 percent).
- . Five of the 50 RDG-040 completers (10.0 percent) had received a Moraine Valley degree by spring 1992.
- . Overall, students in the lowest level reading class (RDG-040) were somewhat less "successful" than students in the second and third level reading classes. RDG-040 students had lower reading class completion rates, lower across-term and across-year retention rates, and a lower graduation rate than students in RDG-070/RDG-090.

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